

Guidance and Procedures 2003 EQIP

Please review this guidance material, the evaluation forms and practice lists for FY 2003. There have been many changes made that you should be aware of. Be careful, the evaluation forms look like those used in previous years. However, there are several significant changes and additional Resource Concerns.

The sign-up for the FY 2003 EQIP will be continuous. The first evaluation period will be Tuesday, July 8th.

Evaluation forms, approved practice lists for each of the resource concerns as well as all other required documents and reference materials may be downloaded from the Virginia NRCS Web Site, www.va.nrcs.usda.gov. All materials will be emailed to NRCS employees in Virginia.

EQIP applications will be scored at the Service Centers and results sent in Excel Spreadsheets for each resource concern to Dan Solomon at the state office for final ranking and funding. An Excel Spreadsheets will be supplied to each Supervisory District Conservationist. There will be a separate spreadsheet for each resource concern. The spreadsheets need to be returned to the State Office for ranking by close of business Tuesday, July 8th. There will be only one set of spreadsheets submitted for each Service Unit. Service Centers are not to send in separate spreadsheets. Any applications received after July 8th will be held at the Service Center and re-entered for the next evaluation period.

Guidance and procedures for FY 2003 EQIP Statewide Concerns

- Each application will be reviewed for accuracy and reasonableness by someone else in the Service Unit before the score is submitted. The EQIP evaluation form has a block for a "preparer's name" and a "checked by" block which needs to be completed.
- Wildlife practices which are given bonus points on an evaluation are to be installed on land treated for an EQIP resource concern or immediately adjacent to EQIP treated acres. The wildlife practice can not be the sole purpose of the contract. A legitimate resource concern must be treated in order to take advantage of the wildlife practice and incentive payment.
- Any NRCS employee who has an EQIP application for a farm he/she has an interest in will contact the state office for guidance before making any EQIP evaluations
- The most current Standard and Specification must be used when planning and implementing conservation practices.

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- Incentive payments are allowed for up to a three year period only. Some practices such as continuous no-till require enrollment for at least the three year period.
- Please read all practice list materials. They contain important guidance for applying certain conservation measures for EQIP.
- All animal waste systems will be planned and developed to comply with current Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan (CNMP) guidance.
- EQIP funds are to be used to implement new practices or management systems not yet adopted to provide environmental benefits. Practices or management systems that have been established or adopted prior to the EQIP contract are not eligible for EQIP funding.
- When points are awarded for environmental benefits in the evaluation process, the conservation plan and contract must have conservation practices to reflect the level of points awarded. For example, if wetland protection is cited and points awarded during the evaluation, the CPO and contract must contain the practice(s) that protect the wetlands. Wetlands should be shown on the conservation plan and notes must document how the wetlands were impacted.
- All practices in an EQIP contract must be funded with EQIP money. Non-cost-shared practices are not permitted.
- The cost-share amount for an application must be \$500 or more in order for an application to be considered for ranking.
- A TMDL Priority List and NPS Impaired Watershed list are provided to answer evaluation questions about watersheds
- Incentive payments may not be paid for Riparian Forest Buffers installed with CREP funds even if the Riparian Forest Buffer is part of the EQIP contract.
- Contracts are from 2 to 10 years. The last year of the contract is for maintenance. No practices are scheduled during the last year of the contract. A final status review is to be conducted in the last year to make certain the contracted practices have been completed and are in good order.
- When estimating the cost for a waste storage facility a conservation engineer will be consulted to help determine feasibility and make an estimate of cost.
- The first practice must be implemented within the first 12 months of the contract.

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- Multiple tracts may be evaluated on one evaluation form if the tracts are within the same HU, used in the same management system by the same applicant(s), and are evaluated for the same resource concern.

Tracking applications and Deadlines

- A set of Excel Spreadsheets is provided to each Supervisory District Conservationist for each resource concern to log application scores and cost-share amount. In addition, gender and race will be tracked on the spreadsheet. The Supervisory District Conservationist will decide how the spreadsheet is to be completed in the service unit and transmitted to the state office. Only one set of spreadsheets will be submitted per Service Unit. Service Centers will send application scores through the Service Unit.
- The sign-up for the FY 2003 EQIP is continuous. Applicants not funded will be deferred to the next evaluation period unless cancelled by the applicant or if the evaluation process is changed. A letter explaining that the application has been deferred will be sent to the applicant by the Service Center.
- All eligible applications are to be processed and the results transmitted on the appropriate Excel Spreadsheet to dan.solomon@va.usda.gov at the state office by close of business on Tuesday, July 8th.
- Conservation plans and cost-share support documentation should be completed and provided to FSA no later than August 2nd, 2003. Funds are not obligated until the contract document is signed by all parties.
- Cost-share amounts in the final contract document should be the same as that used during the application evaluation process.